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FOL REPEAT SAN JOSE 2302 ACTION SECSTATE 8 MAY.

QUOTE

S E C R E T SAN JOSE 2302

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: CASC/CS, PFOR, PGOV (VESCO, ROBERT)

SUBJECT: VESCO CASE: WILKINS' ARREST

REF: SAN JOSE 2301

1. THE EMBASSY HAS SECRETLY RECEIVED MORE INFORMATION REGARDING
EVENTS SURROUNDING ARREST OF JAMES WILLARD WILKINS.

2. ON MONDAY, MAY 10, GOCR MAY MAKE PUBLIC A DECLARATION
SIGNED BY WILKINS IN WHICH HE ALLEGEDLY STATES HE WAS SENT
TO COSTA RICA WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND CONSENT OF U.S. ASSISTANT
ATTORNEY GENERAL ELIOT SAGOR AND DAVID ROSS OF SEC TO INFILTRATE

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ROBERT VESCO ORGANIZATION; REPORT WHATEVER INFORMATION

HE COULD GAIN TO CARL BOGAN, JACK LOWE, AND ROSS VIA COLLECT TELEPHONE CALLS USING CODE WORDS TO DISGUISE MESSAGES; AND EITHER KIDNAP OR ASSASSINATE ROBERT VESCO. WILKINS' MOTIVE FOR UNDERTAKING THIS ASSIGNMENT IS STATED IN THE DECLARATION TO BE HIS EXONERATION FROM REMAINING PAROLE PERIOD FOR PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS FOR ASSAULT AND BATTERY, ROBBERY, LARCENY, AND FORGING FALSE LICENSE PLATES IN THE U.S. (IN ADDITION WILKINS REPORTEDLY HAD CONTRACT WITH SAGOR TO RECEIVE \$1,000 PER MONTH AND \$500 PER MONTH FOR FAMILY DURING THIS ASSIGNMENT. ANOTHER CONTRACT FOR THE SAME AMOUNTS OF MONEY ALLEGEDLY EXISTS BETWEEN WILKINS AND TELEVISION STATION CHANNEL 13, TAMPA, TO REPORT THE VESCO STORY.)

3. THE DECLARATION WOULD SUPPOSEDLY GO ON TO SAY THAT WILKINS PURCHASED AN AIR TICKET (AFTER GETTING PERMISSION TO LEAVE THE U.S. FROM HIS PAROLE OFFICER) FROM NEW YORK TO GUATEMALA TO SAN JOSE TO PANAMA, AND FLEW TO SAN JOSE TO UNDERTAKE HIS ASSIGNMENT WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO GET IN TOUCH WITH U.S. EMBASSY IF HE RAN INTO ANY DIFFICULTIES.

4. EMBASSY SOURCE ALSO REPORTED THAT ON ARRIVAL HE USED A FALSE NAME AT THE AIRPORT AND PROCEEDED NEXT DAY (ABOUT APRIL 22) TO LIBERIA TO ATTEMPT TO CONTACT VESCO. THROUGH VESCO'S PRIVATE SECRETARY (A SENORITA ULATE), HE WAS TOLD TO WAIT AT HIS HOTEL FOR INSTRUCTIONS. A SHORT TIME LATER A VESCO EMPLOYEE, MARIO LUNA, PICKED WILKINS UP AND DROVE HIM BACK TO SAN JOSE, LEAVING HIM AT THE HOTEL DIPLOMATICO WITH INSTRUCTIONS THAT HE WOULD BE CONTACTED THE NEXT DAY BY VESCO PEOPLE. THE FOLLOWING EVENING LUNA AGAIN PICKED UP WILKINS AND DROVE HIM AROUND SAN JOSE FOR ONE TO TWO HOURS BEFORE BEING STOPPED BY A SILVER MERCEDES. WILKINS WAS TOLD TO GET INTO THE FRONT SEAT OF THE MERCEDES. SEATED BEHIND HIM WAS ROBERT VESCO, WHO DEMANDED TO KNOW WHAT WILKINS WAS DOING IN COSTA RICA. WITH A GUN HELD BY THE DRIVER, KNOWN AS "ALBERTO", (PRESUMABLY ALBERTO ABREU, VESCO'S PERSONAL BODY GUARD), IN HIS RIBS, WILKINS REPORTEDLY PROCEEDED TO ADMIT THAT HE WAS SENT TO COSTA RICA TO COLLECT INFORMATION ON VESCO AND, IF POSSIBLE, ATTEMPT TO KIDNAP HIM AND TAKE HIM OUT OF COSTA RICA (POSSIBLY IN THE TRUNK OF A CAR). WILKINS WAS

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THEN ALLOWED TO GET OUT OF THE CAR AND WAS TAKEN BACK TO HIS HOTEL AFTER BEING TOLD THAT HE WOULD BE CONTACTED AGAIN IN A FEW DAYS.

5. ACCORDING TO SAME SOURCE, ON OR ABOUT APRIL 25 OR 26 WILKINS WAS TAKEN TO NUMAR BUILDING (WHERE VESCO ASSOCIATES HAVE OFFICES) WHERE HE WAS AGAIN THREATENED WITH PRISON BY TWO MEN CARRYING GUNS (ONE KNOWN BY NICKNAME OF "ALFALFA")

IF HE DID NOT COOPERATE. HE WAS ORDERED TO MAKE TWO TELEPHONE CALLS, ONE TO ROSS AND ONE TO BOGAN (ATTEMPT TO CONTACT ELIOT SAGOR FAILED), GIVING THEM FALSE INFORMATION THROUGH THEIR PREVIOUSLY ARRANGED SYSTEM OF CODE WORDS (VICKY - VESCO; BANANA - GUNS; WHISKEY - MONEY; ETC.) (NOTE: EMBASSY EARLIER LEARNED FROM INTERROGATOR'S WRITTEN QUESTIONS THAT WILKINS APPARENTLY GAVE POLICE THE FOLLOWING CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS IN U.S.: (A) 212-823-2664; (B) 212-224-0322; (C) 212-475-2379; AND (D) 212-791-1997.)

6. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE TELEPHONE CALLS, WILKINS WAS TAKEN BACK TO HIS HOTEL (ACCORDING TO SAME EMBASSY SOURCE) AND WAS TOLD THAT HE HAD AN INVITATION TO DINNER AT VESCO'S RESIDENCE ON APRIL 30 AND THAT HE WOULD BE PICKED UP AT HIS HOTEL. AROUND 10:00 P.M. ON THE EVENING OF THE 30TH, WHILE WATCHING TV IN THE LOUNGE OF THE HOTEL, COLONEL RODRIGO ARAYA PACHECO, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF DETECTIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SECURITY, AND TWO OTHER OFFICERS ENTERED THE HOTEL AND ARRESTED WILKINS FOR USING A FALSE NAME AT THE AIRPORT UPON ENTRY INTO THE COUNTRY AND TOOK HIM IMMEDIATELY TO THE GUARDIA CIVIL DETENTION AREA WHERE HE WAS PUT INTO A CELL KNOWN AS "CASA MARTA." THE CELL IS ALLEGEDLY SMALL, DAMP, AND WITH NO SANITATION FACILITIES AND WHERE WILKINS SPENT THE NEXT THREE DAYS.

7. ON MAY 6 AT 2:30 P.M., COL. ARAYA AND TWO BI-LINGUAL OFFICERS REPORTEDLY BEGAN INTERROGATING WILKINS. (NOTE: THE CONSUL FIRST LEARNED OF HIS ARREST ON MAY 6 AT ABOUT 1:30 P.M. AND WAS AT THE DETENTION CENTER BY 2:00 ASKING TO SEE WILKINS.) WILKINS ALLEGEDLY DENIED ANY INTENTIONS OF ASSASSINATING VESCO, BUT ADMITTED THAT HE WAS TOLD TO TRY TO KIDNAP VESCO IF POSSIBLE. HOWEVER, UNDER THREATS THAT HE WOULD ROT IN PRISON AND NEVER SEE HIS FAMILY AGAIN, HE AGREED TO
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ADMIT THAT HE WAS SENT TO COSTA RICA TO TRY TO ASSASSINATE VESCO AND THAT THE U.S. EMBASSY WOULD PROTECT HIM AND GET HIM OUT OF THE COUNTRY IF THINGS WENT WRONG. HE WAS ALSO ALLEGEDLY TOLD THAT IF HE SIGNED THE DECLARATION AS INSTRUCTED HE WOULD BE RELEASED DURING EARLY PART OF THE WEEK OF MAY 10.

8. COLONEL ARAYA REPORTEDLY FORCED WILKINS TO TYPE THE DECLARATION HIMSELF, PUTTING HIS CONFESSION INTO HIS (WILKINS') OWN WORDS SINCE THE CONFESSION THAT WAS GIVEN TO ARAYA FOR WILKINS' SIGNATURE WAS TOO WELL WRITTEN IN ENGLISH AND SOUNDED VERY LEGAL AND FORMAL, NOT SOMETHING THAT WILKINS WOULD BE CAPABLE OF PRODUCING. HENCE, THE INTERROGATION AND TYPING UP OF THE DECLARATION TOOK FROM 3:30 P.M. ON MAY 6 TO 6:45 A.M. ON SATURDAY, MAY 8.

9. ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON COL. ARAYA AND THE TWO INTERROGATORS WERE REPORTEDLY INVITED FOR DRINKS TO THE APARTMENT OF "ALBERTO", IN APPRECIATION OF THEIR WORK DURING THE INTERROGATION, WHERE ARAYA SUPPOSEDLY STATED THAT HE IS VERY INTERESTED TO SEE HOW THE EMBASSY WILL REACT WHEN THIS INFORMATION IS MADE KNOWN ON MONDAY. ARAYA WAS ALSO HEARD TO TELL THE INTERROGATORS THAT QUOTE I SPOKE WITH MINISTER CHARPENTIER AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, AND THEY ARE VERY PROUD OF YOUR WORK END QUOTE AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME, "ALBERTO" ALLEGEDLY ASKED COL. ARAYA HOW MUCH HE, ARAYA, THOUGHT THE INTERROGATORS SHOULD BE PAID BY "ALBERTO".

10. EMBASSY SOURCE ALSO REPORTED THAT WILKINS WAS ALLOWED TO WASH FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE HIS ARREST, GIVEN ALL THE FOOD AND CIGARETTES HE WANTED, AND TOLD TO SUN BATHE JUST PRIOR TO SEEING THE CONSUL FOR THE FIRST TIME. MOREOVER, WILKINS WAS ALLEGEDLY PRIMED NOT TO MENTION ANYTHING CONCERNING VESCO IN THE CONSUL'S PRESENCE OR HE WOULD BE SENT BACK TO "CASA MARTA".

11. COMMENTS: SOURCE OF ABOVE INFORMATION, WHO ALSO PROVIDED PREVIOUS INFORMATION ON INTERROGATION OF WILKINS REPORTED REFTEL, IS PREVIOUSLY UNTESTED, BUT EMBASSY IS INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT INFORMATION IS GENERALLY ACCURATE. WE ANTICIPATE THAT WE WILL PROBABLY BE CONFRONTED WITH MAIN THRUST OF THIS ATTACK ON MONDAY THROUGH PRESS OR PERHAPS IN DIRECT SECRET

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APPROACH TO AMBASSADOR BY FOREIGN MINISTER, PRESIDENT, OR MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY. SUCH DIRECT OFFICIAL APPROACH NOW SEEMS SOMEWHAT MORE LIKELY SINCE AMBASSADOR RAISED THE WILKINS CONSULAR PROTECTION CASE WITH PRESIDENT SATURDAY DURING DEDICATION OF NEW SEED PLANT. ODUBER SAID HE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THE CASE BUT WOULD LOOK INTO IT.

12. CONSUL WILL AGAIN SEEK APPOINTMENT MONDAY WITH MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY TO PRESS FOR DECISION ON CHARGES AGAINST WILKINS. HE WILL ALSO SEEK TO CONTACT LAWYER CHOSEN BY WILKINS, WHICH HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE OVER WEEKEND.

13. IN VIEW OF SCOPE OF ALLEGATIONS WHICH WE ANTICIPATE IN THIS CASE, EMBASSY BELIEVES IT WOULD BE UNTENABLE FOR USG TO DENY IF ASKED THAT WILKINS HAS HAD ANY CONTACT WITH SAGOR OR OTHER OFFICIALS. IT IS HIGHLY PROBABLE THAT ONE OR MORE OF THE LONG DISTANCE CALLS MENTIONED ABOVE AND IN PARAGRAPH THREE OF STATE 110970 WERE RECORDED. WE BELIEVE IT ESSENTIAL, THEREFORE, THAT ANY QUESTIONS BY GOCR OR PRESS BE REFERRED TO JUSTICE DEPARTMENT OR U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE AND SEC, AND THAT THEIR RESPONSE ADMIT THAT WILKINS DID APPROACH THOSE OFFICIALS WITH OFFER TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON VESCO.

RESPONSE WOULD DENY ANY COMPLICITY IN KIDNAPPING OR MURDER PLANS, AND WOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT NO OFFICIALS IN STATE DEPARTMENT OR THIS EMBASSY WERE INFORMED IN ADVANCE OF ARRANGEMENTS WITH WILKINS. PLEASE CONFIRM BY IMMEDIATE CABLE CONCURRENCE OF ALL WASHINGTON AGENCIES IN THIS APPROACH.

14. IT IS, OF COURSE, POSSIBLE THAT THE DECISION BY VESCO AND COMPANY WILL BE TO HOLD THESE ALLEGATIONS FOR SURPRISE USE AT SOME FUTURE DATE, FOR EXAMPLE AS EVIDENCE TO DISCREDIT U.S. IN ANY FUTURE EXTRADITION ATTEMPT BY SHOWING THAT THE U.S. HAS EMPLOYED ILLEGAL MEANS TO ATTEMPT TO GET VESCO, AND THAT HE IS THE TARGET OF POLITICAL CHARGES.
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